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# A CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION<sup>1</sup>

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The ambiguity which surrounds the origin and nature of religion will never be removed so long as we insist upon approaching the problem as one for which a single word will be the "open sesame." Thus far, no one has been able to offer a definition which, without vagueness and yet with sufficient comprehensiveness, has told once for all what religion is in its essence, in that which is common alike to the religion of Christians and South Sea islanders, to Buddhism and Mexican idolatry. Thus far it has not been distinguished, on the one hand, from mere metaphysical speculation, nor, on the other, from the credulity which believes in "ghosts." Its purest and highest manifestations are not yet proof against comparison with these. And the multiplicity of psychological causes to which religion is ascribed corresponds to this indefinite conception as to its nature. It matters not whether fear or love, ancestor-worship or self-deification, the moral instincts or the feeling of dependence, be regarded as the subjective root of religion; a theory is only then entirely erroneous when it assumes to be the sole explanation, and then only correct when it claims to point out merely one of the sources of religion. Hence the solution of the problem will be approached only when all the impulses, ideas, and conditions operating in this domain are inventoried, and that with the express determination that the significance of known particular motives is not to be arbitrarily expanded into general laws. Nor is this the only reservation that must be made in an attempt to determine the religious significance of the phenomena of social life which preceded all religion in the order of time. It must also be emphatically insisted upon that, no matter how mundanely and empiri-

<sup>1</sup> Translated by W. W. Elwang, A.M., University of Missouri.

cally the origin of ideas about the super-mundane and transcendental is explained, neither the subjective emotional value of these ideas, nor their objective value as matters of fact, is at all in question. Both of these values lie beyond the limits which our merely genetic, psychological inquiry aims to reach.

In attempting to find the beginnings of religion in human relations which are in themselves non-religious, we merely follow a well-known method. It has long been admitted that science is merely a heightening, a refinement, a completion, of those means of knowledge which, in lower and dimmer degree, assist us in forming our judgments and experiences in daily, practical life. We only then arrive at a genetic explanation of art when we have analyzed those æsthetic experiences of life, in speech, in the emotions, in business, in social affairs, which are not in themselves artistic. All high and pure forms existed at first experimentally, as it were, in the germ, in connection with other forms; but in order to comprehend them in their highest and independent forms, we must look for them in their undeveloped states. Their significance, psychologically, will depend upon the determination of their proper places in a series which develops, as if by an organic growth, through a variety of stages, so that the new and differentiated in each appears as the unfolding of a germ contained in that which had preceded it. Thus it may help us to an insight into the origin and nature of religion, if we can discover in all kinds of non-religious conditions and interests certain religious momenta, the beginnings of what later came to be religion, definitely and independently. I do not believe that the religious feelings and impulses manifest themselves in religion only; rather, that they are to be found in many connections, a co-operating element in various situations, whose extreme development and differentiation is religion as an independent content of life. In order, now, to find the points at which, in the shifting conditions of human life, the momenta of religion originated, it will be necessary to digress to what may seem to be entirely foreign phenomena.

It has long been known that custom is the chief form of social control in the lower culture conditions. Those life-conditions

which, on the one hand, are subsequently codified as laws and enforced by the police power of the state, and, on the other hand, are remitted to the free consent of the cultivated and trained individual *socius*, are, in narrower and primitive circles, guaranteed by that peculiar, immediate control of the individual by his environment which we call custom. Custom, law, and the voluntary morality of the individual are different unifying elements of the social structure which can carry the same obligations as their content, and, as a matter of fact, have had them among different peoples at different times. Many of the norms and practices of public life are supported both by the free play of competing forces and by the control of the lower elements by higher ones. Many social interests were at first protected by the family organization, but later, or in other places, were taken under the care of purely voluntary associations or by the state. It can, in general, be asserted that the differentiations which characterize the social structure are always due to definite ends, causes, and interests; and so long as these continue, the social life, and the forms in which it expresses itself, may be exceedingly diverse, just as, on the other hand, this differentiation may itself have the most varied content. It seems to me that among these forms which human relations assume, and which may have the most diverse contents, there is one which cannot be otherwise described than as religious, even though this designation of it, to be sure, anticipates the name of the complete structure for its mere beginning and conditioning. For the coloring, so to speak, which justifies this description must not be a reflection from already existing religion; rather, human contact, in the purely psychological aspect of its interaction, develops that definite tendency which, heightened, and differentiated to independence, is known as religion.

We can safely assume that many human relations harbor a religious element. The relation of a devoted child to its parent, of an enthusiastic patriot to his country, of the fervent cosmopolite toward humanity; the relation of the laboring-man to his struggling fellows, or of the proud feudal lord to his class; the relation of the subject to the ruler under whose control he is, and

of the true soldier to his army—all these relations, with their infinite variety of content, looked at from the psychological side, may have a common tone which can be described only as religious. All religion contains a peculiar admixture of unselfish surrender and fervent desire, of humility and exaltation, of sensual concreteness and spiritual abstraction, which occasion a certain degree of emotional tension, a specific ardor and certainty of the subjective conditions, an inclusion of the subject experiencing them in a higher order—an order which is at the same time felt to be something subjective and personal. This religious quality is contained, it seems to me, in many other relations, and gives them a note which distinguishes them from relations based upon pure egoism, or pure suggestion, or even purely moral forces. As a matter of course, this quality is present with more or less strength, now appearing merely like a light overtone, and again as a quite distinct coloring. In many and important instances the developing period of these relations is thus characterized; that is to say, the same content which previously or at some subsequent period was borne by other forms of human relation, assumes a religious form in other periods. All this is best illustrated by those laws which at certain times or places reveal a theocratic character, are completely under religious sanctions, but which, at other times and places, are guaranteed either by the state or by custom. It would even seem as if the indispensable requirements of society frequently emerged from an entirely undifferentiated form in which moral, religious, and juridical sanctions were still indiscriminately mingled, like the Dharma of the Hindus, the Themis of the Greeks, and the *fas* of the Latins, and that finally, as historical conditions varied, now one and now the other of these sanctions developed into the “bearer” of such requirements. In the relation of the individual to the group also these changes can be observed; in times when patriotism is aroused, this relation assumes a devotion, a fervor, and a readiness of self-surrender which can be described only as religious; while at other times it is controlled by conventionality or the law of the land. For us the important thing is that it is, in every case, a question of human relations, and that it is merely a change, as it were, in the

aggregate condition of these relations when, instead of purely conventional, it becomes religious, and instead of religious, legal, and then, in turn, voluntary, as a matter of fact, many socially injurious immoralities first found a place in the criminal code because of the resentment of the church; or, as illustrated by anti-Semitism, because a social-economic or racial relation between certain groups within a group can be transferred to the religious category, without, however, really becoming anything else than a social relation; or, as some suppose, that religious prostitution was merely a development of sexual life which was earlier or elsewhere controlled by pure convention.

In view of these examples, a previously indicated error must be more definitely guarded against. The theory here set forth is not intended to prove that certain social interests and occurrences were controlled by an already independently existing religious system. That, certainly, occurs often enough, brings about combinations of the greatest historical importance, and is very significant also in the examples cited. But what I mean is precisely the reverse of this, and, it must be admitted, of much less apparent connection, and one more difficult to discover; namely, that in those social relations the quality which we afterward, on account of its analogy with other existing religiosity, call religious, comes into being spontaneously, as a pure socio-psychological constellation, one of the possible relations of man to man. In contrast to this, religion, as an independent phenomenon, is a derivative thing, almost like the state in the Roman and modern sense, as an objective and self-sufficient existence, is secondary in contrast to the original causes, relations, and customs which immediately controlled the social elements, and which only gradually projected upon or abrogated to the state the conservation and execution of their contents. The entire history of social life is permeated by this process: the positively antagonistic motives of individuals, with which their social life begins, grow up into separate and independent organisms. Thus, from the regulations for preserving the group-life there arise, on the one hand, the law which codifies them, and, on the other, the judge whose business it is to apply them. Thus, from socially necessary tasks, first

performed with the co-operation of all, and according to the rude empiricism of the times, there develop, on the one hand, a technology, as an ideal system of knowledge and rules, and, on the other hand, the laborer as the differentiated means for accomplishing those tasks. In a similar manner, although in these infinitely complex affairs the analogy constantly breaks down, it may have happened in things religious. The individual in a group is related to others, or to all, in the way above described; that is to say, his relations to them partake of a certain degree of exaltation, devotion, and fervency. From this there develops an ideal content, on the one hand, or gods, who protect those who sustain these relations; who brought the emotions which they experience into being; who, by their very existence, then bring into sharp relief — as an independent entity, so to speak — what had hitherto only existed as a form of human relation, and more or less blended with more actual life-forms. And this complex of ideas or phantasies finds an executive representation in the priesthood, like law in the person of the judge, or learning in a scholarly class. When this identification or substantialization of religion has been accomplished, it, in turn, has its effect upon the direct psychical relations of men among themselves, giving them the now well-known and so-called quality of *religiosity*. But in so doing it merely gives back what it had originally received. And it may, perhaps, be asserted that the so often wonderful and abstruse religious ideas could never have obtained their influence upon men if they had not been the formulæ or embodiments of previously existing relations for which consciousness had not yet found a more appropriate expression.

The intellectual motive underlying this explanation is a very general one, and may be expressed as a comprehensive rule, of which the materialistic conception of history affords a single illustration. When materialism derives the entire content of historic life from economic conditions, and defines custom and law, art and religion, science and social progress accordingly, a part of a very comprehensive process is exaggerated into the whole. The development of the forms and contents of social life, throughout its wide territory and multiplied phenomena, is

such that the selfsame content finds expression in many forms, and the same form in many contents. The events of history arrange themselves as if they were controlled by a tendency to make as much as possible of every given sum of movements. This is, apparently, the reason why history does not disintegrate into a collection of aphoristic movements, but binds together intimately, not only the synchronous, but the successive. That any particular form of life—social, literary, religious, personal—should survive its connection with a single content, and also lend itself unchanged to a new one; that the single content should maintain its essential nature through a mass of successive and mutually destructive forms, is precisely what the continuity of history will not permit. On the contrary, it prevents it, so that there should not be at some point an irrational leap, a break in the connection with the past. Since, now, the evolution of the race generally advances from the sensual and objective to the mental and subjective—only, it is true, frequently to reverse this order—there will often occur, in economic life, factors in the form of the abstract and intellectual, the forms which have built up the economic interests will intrude themselves into entirely different life-contents. But that is only one of the instances in which continuity and the law of parsimony are found in history. When, for example, the form of government exhibited in the state is repeated in the family; when the prevailing religion gives direction and inspiration to art; when frequent wars make the individual brutal and offensive even in peace; when political divisions influence non-political affairs and align diverging tendencies of culture according to party principles; then these are all expressions of this emphasized character of all historic life, of which the materialistic theory of history illuminates only a single side. And it is this side precisely which illustrates the development with which we are here concerned; forms of social relations either condense or refine themselves into a system of religious ideas, or add new elements to those which already exist; or, viewed differently, a specific emotional content which arose in the form of individual interaction, transfers itself in this relationship into a transcendent idea; this builds a new category



according to which the forms or contents are experienced which have their origin in human relationships. I shall try to demonstrate this general suggestion by applying it to a particular phase of the religious life.

The faith which has come to be regarded as the essential, the substance, of religion, is first a relation between individuals; for it is a question of practical faith, which is by no means merely a lower form or attenuation of theoretical belief. When I say, "I believe in God," the assertion means something entirely different from the statement, "I believe in the existence of ether waves;" or, "The moon is inhabited;" or, "Human nature is always the same." It means not only that I accept the existence of God, even though it be not fully demonstrable, but it implies also a certain subjective relation to him, a going out of the affections to him, an attitude of life; in all of which there is a peculiar mixture of faith as a kind of method of knowledge with practical impulses and feelings. And now, as to the analogy of all this in human socialization. We do not base our mutual relations by any means upon what we conclusively know about each other. Rather, our feelings and suggestions express themselves in certain representations which can be described only as matters of faith, and which, in turn, have a reflex effect upon practical conditions. It is a specific psychological fact, hard to define, which we illustrate when we "believe in someone"—the child in its parents, the subordinate in his superior, friend in friend, the individual in the nation, and the subject in his sovereign. The social rôle of this faith has never been investigated; but this much is certain, that without it society would disintegrate. Obedience, for example, is largely based upon it. In innumerable instances it depends neither upon a definite recognition of law and force, nor upon affection, or suggestion, but upon that psychical intermediate thing which we call faith in a person or a group of persons. It has often been remarked that it is an incomprehensible thing that individuals, and entire classes, allow themselves to be oppressed and exploited, even though they possess ample power to secure immunity. But this is precisely the result of an easy-going, uncritical faith in the power, value, superiority, and goodness of

those in authority — a faith which is by no means an uncertain, theoretical assumption, but a unique thing, compounded of knowledge, instinct, and feeling, which is concisely and simply described as faith in them. That, in the face of reasonable proof to the contrary, we still can retain our faith in an individual is one of the strongest of the ties that bind society. This faith, now, is of a most positive religious character. I do not mean that the religion was first, and that the sociological relations borrowed their attribute from it. I believe, rather, that the sociological significance arises without any regard for the religious data at all as a purely inter-individual, psychological relation, which later exhibits itself abstractly in religious faith. In faith in a deity the highest development of faith has become incorporate, so to speak; has been relieved of its connection with its social counterpart. Out of the subjective faith-process there develops, contrariwise, an object for that faith. The faith in human relations which exists as a social necessity now becomes an independent, typical function of humanity which spontaneously authenticates itself from within; just as it is no rare phenomenon for a certain object to produce a certain psychical process in us, and afterward for this process, having become independent, to create a corresponding object for itself. Human intercourse, in its ordinary as well as in its highest content, reveals in so many ways the psychological form of faith as its warrant that the necessity for “believing” develops spontaneously, and in so doing creates objects for its justification, much as the impulses of love or veneration can fasten themselves upon objects which in themselves could by no means evoke such sentiments, but whose qualifications for so doing are reflected upon them from the needs of the subject, or, as looked at from the other side, God as creator has been described as the product of the causal necessity in man. This last assertion by no means denies that this conception also has objective reality; only the motive out of which it grew subjectively into an idea is in question. The assumption is that the infinitely frequent application of the causal idea in the realm of its origin, the empiric-relative, finally made the need for it a dominating one, so that it found satisfaction, which was really denied it in the realm of the

absolute, in the idea of an Absolute Being as the cause of the world. A similar process may project belief beyond the confines of its social origin, develop it into a similar organic need, and beget for it the idea of deity as an absolute object.

Another side of the social life which develops into a corresponding one within the religious life is found in the concept of unity. That we do not simply accept the disconnected manifoldness of our impressions of things, but look for the connections and relations which bind them into a unity; yes, that we everywhere presuppose the presence of higher unities and centers for the seemingly separate phenomena, in order that we may orient ourselves aright amid the confusion with which they come to us, is assuredly one of the important characteristics of social realities and necessities. Nowhere do we find, so directly and appreciably, a whole made up of separate elements; nowhere is their separation and free movement so energetically controlled by the center, as in the gens, the family, the state, in every purposive organization. When primitive associations are so often found organized in tens, it means, clearly, that the group-relationship is similar to that of the fingers of the hand—relative freedom and independent movement of the individual, and, at the same time, unity of purpose and inseparableness of existence from others. The fact that all social life is a relationship at once defines it as a unity; for what does unity signify but that many are mutually related, and that the fate of each is felt by all? The fact that this unity of society is occasionally attacked, that the freedom of the individual prompts him to break away from it, and that it is not absolutely true of the closest and most naïve relations, like the unity of the constituent parts of an organism—all this is precisely what must have driven it home to human consciousness as a particular form and special value of existence. The unity of things and interests which first impresses us in the social realm finds its highest representation—and one, as it were, separated from all material considerations—in the idea of the divine; most completely, of course, in the monotheistic, but relatively also in the lower, religions. It is the deepest significance of the God-idea that the manifoldness and contradictoriness of things find in it their rela-

tion and unity, it matters not whether it be the absolute unity of the one God, or the partial unities of polytheism. Thus, for example, the social life of the ancient Arabians, with the all-controlling influence of its tribal unity, foreshadowed monotheism; among Semitic peoples, like the Jews, Phoenicians, and Canaanites, the method of their social unification and its transformations was plainly reflected in the character of their gods. So long as family unity was the controlling form, Baal signified only a father, whose children were the people. In proportion as the social aggregate included foreign branches not related by blood, he became a ruler objectively enthroned above. So soon as the social unity loses the character of blood-relationship, the religious unity also loses it, so that the latter appears as the purely derived form of the former. Even the unification which rises superior to the sex-differentiation forms a particular religious type. The psychological obliteration of the sex-contrast, found so conspicuously in the social life of the Syrians, Assyrians, and Lydians, terminated in the conception of divinities which combined the two—the half-masculine Astarte, the man-woman Sandon, the sun-god Melkarth, who exchanges the sex-symbols with the moon-goddess. It is not a question about the trivial proposition that mankind is reflected in its gods—a general truth which needs no proof. The question is, rather, to find those particular human characteristics whose development and extension beyond the human create the gods. And it must also be borne in mind that the gods do not exist as the idealization of individual characteristics, of the power, or moral or immoral characteristics, or the inclinations and needs of individuals; but that it is the inter-individual forms of life which often give their content to religious ideas. In that certain phases and intensities of social functions assume their purest, most abstract, and, at the same time, incorporate forms, they form the objects of religions, so that it can be said that religion, whatever else it may be, consists of forms of social relationships which, separated from their empirical content, become independent and have substances of their own attributed to them.

Two further considerations will illustrate how much the

unity of the group belongs to the functions that have developed into religion. The unity of the group is brought about and conserved, especially in primitive times, by the absence of war or competition within the group, in sharp contrast to the relations sustained to all outsiders. Now, there is probably no other single domain in which this non-competitive form of existence, this identity of aim and interest, is so clearly and completely represented as in religion. The peaceful character of the group-life just referred to is only relative. With the majority of the efforts put forth within the group there is also implied an attempt to exclude others from the same goal; to reduce as much as possible the disproportion between desire and satisfaction, even if it be at some cost to others; at least to find a criterion for doing and enjoying in the corresponding activities of others. It is almost solely in religion that the energies of individuals can find fullest development without coming into competition with each other, because, as Jesus so beautifully expresses it, there is room for all in God's house. Although the goal is common to all, it is possible for all to achieve it, not only without mutual exclusion, but by mutual co-operation. I call attention to the profound way in which the Lord's Supper expresses the truth that the same goal is for all, and to be reached by the same means; and also to the feasts which objectify the union of those who are moved by the same religious emotions, from the rude feasts of primitive religions, in which the union finally degenerated into sexual orgies, to its purest expression, the *pax hominibus*, which extended far beyond any single group. That absence of competition which conditions unity as the life-form of the group, but which always reigns only relatively and partially in it, has found absolute and intensest realization in the religious realm. It might actually be said of religion, as of faith, that it represents in substance — yes, to a certain extent consists of the substantialization of — that which, as form and function, regulates the group-life. And this, in turn, assumes a personal form in a priesthood which, despite its historic connection with certain classes, stands, in its fundamental idea, above all classes, and precisely on that account represents the focus and unity of the ideal life-content for all indi-

viduals. Thus the celibacy of the Catholic priesthood frees them from every special relation to any element or group of elements, and makes possible a uniform relation to each; just as "society" or the "state" stands above individuals as the abstract unity which represents all their relationships in itself. And, to mention a thoroughly concrete instance, throughout the Middle Ages the church afforded every benevolent impulse the great convenience of a central reservoir into which every benefaction could flow unchallenged. He who desired to rid himself of his wealth for the benefit of others did not have to bother about the ways and means, because there existed for this very purpose a universal central organ between the giver and the needy. Thus benevolence, a form of social relation within the group, secured, in the church, an organization and unity above the individual.

In like manner the reverse of this relation, with, however, the same germ, is seen in the attitude toward heretics. That which arrays great masses in hatred and moral condemnation against heretics is certainly not the difference in the dogmatic content of teaching, which, in most instances, is really not at all understood. It is rather the fact of the opposition of the one against the many. The persecution of heretics and dissenters springs from the instinct which recognizes the necessity for group-unity. Now, it is especially significant that in many instances of this kind religious variation could very well exist in conjunction with the unity of the group in all vital matters. But in religion the social instinct for unity has assumed such a pure, abstract, and, at the same time, substantial form that it no longer requires a union with real interests; while non-conformity seems to threaten the unity—that is to say, the very life-form—of the group. Just as an attack upon a palladium or other symbol of group-unity will evoke the most violent reaction, even though it may have no direct connection with it at all, so religion is the purest form of unity in society, raised high above all concrete individualities. This is demonstrated by the energy with which every heresy, no matter how irrelevant, is still combated.

And, finally, those internal relations between the individual and the group which we characterize as moral offer such deep

analogies to the individual's relations to his God that they would seem almost to be nothing more than their condensation and transformation. The whole wonderful fulness of the former is reflected in the many ways in which we "sense" the divine. The compelling and punitive gods, the loving God, the God of Spinoza who cannot return our love, the God who both bestows and deprives us of the inclination and ability to act—these are precisely the tokens by which the ethical relation between the group and its members unfolds its energies and oppositions. I call attention to the feeling of dependence, in which the essence of all religion has been found. The individual feels himself bound to a universal, to something higher, out of which he came, and into which he will return, and from which he also expects assistance and salvation, from which he differs and is yet identical with it. All these emotions, which meet as in a focus in the idea of God, can be traced back to the relation which the individual sustains to his species; on the one hand, to the past generations which have supplied him with the principal forms and contents of his being, on the other, to his contemporaries, who condition the manner and extent of its development. If the theory is correct which asserts that all religion is derived from ancestor-worship, from the worship and conciliation of the immortal soul of a forbear, especially of a hero and leader, it will confirm this connection; for we are, as a matter of fact, dependent upon what has been before us, and which was most directly concentrated in the authority of the fathers over their descendants. The deification of ancestors, especially of the ablest and most successful, is, as it were, the most appropriate expression of the dependence of the individual upon the previous life of the group, even though consciousness may reveal other motives for it. Thus the humility with which the pious person acknowledges that all that he is and has comes from God, and recognizes in him the source of his existence and ability, is properly traced to the relation of the individual to the whole. For man is not absolutely nothing in contrast to God, but only a dust-mote; a weak, but not entirely vain, force; a vessel, but yet adapted to its contents. When a given idea of God is, in essence, the origin and at the same time the unity of all the varieties of

being and willing, of all the antitheses and differences especially of our subjective life-interests, we can without more ado put the social totality into its place; for it is from this totality that all those impulses flow which come to us as the results of shifting adaptations, all that multiplicity of relations in which we find ourselves, that development of the organs with which we apprehend the different and almost irreconcilable aspects of the universe. And yet the social group is sufficiently unified to be regarded as the real unifying focus of these divergent radiations. Furthermore, the divine authority of kings is merely an expression for the complete concentration of power in their hands; as soon as the social unification, the objectification of the whole as against a part, has reached a certain point, it is conceived of by the individual as a supra-mundane power. And then, whether he still directly conceives it as social, or whether it is already clothed with divinity, the problem arises how much he, as an individual, can and must do to fulfil his destiny, and how much that supra-mundane principle will assist him. The independence of the individual in relation to that power, from which he received his independence, and which conditions its aims and methods, is as much a question in this case as in the other. Thus Augustine places the individual in a historic development against which he is as impotent as he is against God. And the doctrine of synergism is found throughout the entire history of the church conditioned by her internal politics. Just as, according to the strict religious conception, the individual is merely a vessel of the grace or wrath of god, so, according to the socialistic conception, he is a vessel of the forces emanating from the universal; and both instances reproduce the same fundamental ethical problem about the nature and the rights of the individual, and in both forms the surrender of the one to the other opposite principle frequently offers the only satisfaction still possible when an individuality, thrown wholly upon its own resources, no longer has the power to maintain itself.

This arrangement of religious and ethical-social ideas is supported by the fact that God is conceived as the personification of those virtues which he himself demands from the people. He is



goodness, justice, patience, etc., rather than the possessor of these attributes; he is, as it is sometimes expressed, perfection in substance; he is goodness itself, and love itself, etc. Morality, the imperatives that control human conduct, has, so to speak, become immutable in him. As practical belief is a relation between persons which fashions an absolute over and above the form of relation; as unity is a form of relation between a group of persons which raises itself to that personification of the unity of things in which the divine is represented; so morality contains those forms of relation between man and man which the interests of the group has sanctioned, so that the God who exhibits the relative contents in absolute form, on the one hand, represents the claims and benefits of the group, as against the individual, and, on the other, divests those ethical-social duties which the individual must perform of their relativity, and presents them in himself in an absolutely substantial form. The relations of persons to each other, which have grown out of the most manifold interests, have been supported by the most opposite forces, and have been cast into the most diverse forms, also attain a condition in the aggregate whose identification with and relation to a Being above and beyond them we call religion—in that they become both abstract and concrete, a dual development which gives religion the strength with which it again, reflexively, influences those relations. The old idea that God is the Absolute, while that which is human is relative, here assumes a new meaning: it is the relations between men which find their substantial and ideal expression in the idea of the divine.

If investigations like this, touching the fundamentals of being, are usually accompanied by the hope that their significance should be understood sufficiently comprehensively, the reverse must here be the case, and the wish expressed that the arguments here set forth must not be permitted to intrude upon neighboring domains, beyond their own limited boundaries. They are not intended to describe the historical course of the origin of religion, but only to point out one of its many sources, quite irrespective of the fact whether this source, in conjunction with others, also from the domain of the non-religious, gave birth to religion, or whether

religion had already come into being when the sources here discussed added their quota to its content—their effectiveness is not dependent upon any particular historical occasion. It must also be borne in mind that religion, as a spiritual experience, is not a finished product, but a vital process which each soul must beget for itself, no matter how stable the traditional content may be; and it is precisely here that the power and depth of religion are found, namely, in its persistent ability to draw a given content of religion into the flow of the emotions, whose movements must constantly renew it, like the perpetually changing drops of water which beget the stable picture of the rainbow. Hence the genetic explanation of religion must not only embrace the historical origin of its tradition, but its present energies also which allow us to acquire what has come down to us from the fathers; so that in this sense there are really “origins” of religion whose appearance and effectiveness lie long after the “origin” of religion.

But, more important even than to deny that we offer here a theory of the historical origin of religion, is it to insist that the objective truth of religion has nothing whatever to do with this investigation. Even if we have succeeded in the attempt to understand religion as a product of the subjective conditions of human life, we have not at all impinged upon the problem whether the objective reality which lies outside of human thought contains the counterpart and confirmation of the psychical reality which we have here discussed. Thus the psychology of cognition seeks to explain how the mind conceives the world to be spatial, and of three dimensions, but is content to have other disciplines undertake to prove whether beyond our mental world there is a world of things in themselves of like forms. It is true, there may be a limit beyond which the explanation of subjective facts from purely subjective conditions may not be sufficient. The chain of causes may have to terminate somewhere in an objective reality. But this possibility or necessity can concern only him who has in view the complete elucidation of the origin and nature of religion, but it does not affect our attempt to trace only a single one of the rays that are focused in religion.

Finally, the most important consideration remains. The emo-

tional value of religion—that is to say, the most subjective reflexive effect of the idea of God—is entirely independent of all assumption about the manner in which the idea originated. We here touch upon the most serious misconception to which the attempt to trace ideal values historically and psychologically is exposed. There are still many who feel that an ideal is deprived of its greatest charm, that the dignity of an emotion is degraded, if its origin can no longer be thought of as an incomprehensible miracle, a creation out of nothing—as if the comprehension of its development affected the value of a thing, as if lowliness of origin could affect the already achieved loftiness of the goal, and as if the simplicity of its several elements could destroy the importance of a product. Such is the foolish and confused notion that the dignity of humanity is profaned by tracing man's origin to the lower animals, as if that dignity did not depend upon what man really is, no matter what his origin. Persons entertaining such notions will always resist the attempt to understand religion by deriving it from elements not in themselves religious. But precisely such persons, who hope to preserve the dignity of religion by denying its historical-psychological origin, must be reproached with weakness of religious consciousness. Their subjective certainty and emotional depth must assuredly be of little moment, if the knowledge of their origin and development endangers or even touches their validity and worth. For, just as genuine and deepest love for a human being is not disturbed by subsequent evidence concerning its causes—yes, as its triumphant strength is revealed by its survival of the passing of those causes—so the strength of the subjective religious emotion is revealed only by the assurance which it has in itself, and with which it grounds its depth and intensity entirely beyond all the causes to which investigation may trace it.